

Worker Coops

Constructing the Cooperative Decade

- We, the worker cooperatives, together with our partners of the social economy movement, are going through a period of profound changes, trying to develop strategies for gaining power in order to make the world more equitable and just.

•The neoliberal Capitalism is in crisis because it is based on great injustice which is the exploitation of people and the destruction of environment

- 1.5 billion people live on just one dollar a day
- 85 people hold the same wealth as 46% of the world population.

The challenge is to transform this reality.

- We must fight to build a society based on solidarity, on sharing, focused on the human being and on respecting the planet (economic, social and environmental sustainability)

The cooperatives have to commit
themselves...

To this struggle and to this
construction.

We cannot do it alone

- Together with the other members of the social economy movement (cooperatives and mutuels), with associated SMEs, with the organized workers' movement, with universities, social and cultural movements, **we have to become the political, economic, social and cultural actor which changes societies.**

Constructing a new model of a solidary society...

As response to the hegemonic system we should initiated a project of solidarity, starting with our enterprises and territories.

To achieve this goal we need conviction and political activism.

We have to fight, tear down privileges, put an end to prejudices, democratize everything: politics, economy, culture, communication and knowledge.

- We say: The equivalent to political democracy (one citizen, one vote) is economic democracy (one member, one vote).

In the economy...

- Being able to represent an option in the economy by building corporations of cooperatives and mutuels, in the territory as well as in different economic sectors.
 - λ Establish alliances to control value chains (32,000 coops and mutuels and 1,200,000 SMEs in Argentina), acquire own financial instruments and alliances with public enterprises
 - λ Develop own technology in cooperation with universities and technological institutes.

In the social realm...

- Form an integrative society, with equal possibilities for all, in which there is enough food for children and where the elderly are being cared for, where there exists a right to work, to health, to housing, to education and to a healthy environment.

In the cultural realm...

- Reconstruct the values of solidarity, of sharing and of non-discrimination
- Establish the right to communication
- Stop being consumers and start being humans.

- The human being is a social being, it is being formed collectively. But currently, a culture in which a few people take advantage of the rest, a culture of exploitation, is being imposed.
- It is essential to recover all expressions of art and culture, so that everyone can benefit and not only a few.*

Today, the enterprises are
controlled by only one factor:

capital

We have to create a different type of enterprise

- Enterprises held by the people where one member has one vote
- An enterprise is socially constructed, therefore the means of production, of distribution, of consumption and change have to be social property.

We have to convince those who
do not form part of a
cooperative, of the need
for change.

The crucial factors for winning
this battle are...

Education and communication

Building another subjectivity

- λ We have to question the educational system and its content at all levels.
- λ We have to have means of communication managed by the solidary economy.
- λ We have to achieve that it becomes normal to create cooperatives and to cooperate instead of competing.

In Argentina the worker coops...

are a result of the crisis.

They emerged as...

- Cooperatives which were enterprises abandoned by the owner and recovered by the workers
- Cooperatives founded by people who lost their jobs during the military dictatorship and who did not find work otherwise
- Cooperatives founded by unemployed people who learned about cooperativism and how to build up their own cooperative through programs of inclusion by the national government.

...and as...

- Cooperatives in prisons, where people having lost their freedom, did not lose the right to work collectively
- Cooperatives founded by young professionals who have been excluded by the capitalist system and who, collectively, started to work in the fields of technology and communication.

- In our country, the first to appear was the workers' movement. And as a result of the fight of the labour unions the first workers' cooperative was created in 1928. Today there are 9,000 worker cooperatives, constituting 30% of all cooperatives in Argentina.

Almost 100 years of cooperative
construction have taught us...

...The enterprise is the result of a collective struggle

- An enterprise is born out of a wide solidary movement: labour unions, federations, confederations, social movements, political parties, families, friends, all of them contribute to the foundation of an enterprise.
- The birth of a workers' cooperative is a great work of collective creation.

...An enterprise is a human organization

- A cooperative is not made by buildings or machines but by human beings and their solidary social relations.
- The quality of solidarity among the human beings determines the quality of the enterprise, without this there is no cooperative.

The cooperativist subject has to be formed within the solidary enterprise.

- Education and training constitute central elements of the construction of cooperative beings.
- It is a constant construction, step by step, analyzing actions, criticizing ourselves, aiming at being better workers and persons.
- The leaders of today have to form the leaders of tomorrow.

The principal ideological strength is our worker's identity

- We create enterprises to free ourselves from the employer, but not to become one of them.
- We are proud to be workers.
- We have to build up strong enterprises in order to work under decent conditions and emancipate ourselves from the logic of capital.

We have to understand that the factors of production are work and capital

- That you need both factors to build an enterprise.
 - The capital is accumulated work, created by ourselves.
- We have to capitalize it to strengthen our enterprises.
- In times of dictatorship we exploited ourselves in order to capitalize. In times of democracy, the popular governments help us to expand our capital with credits and subsidies.

We should not hesitate to ask capable professionals for help.

- We need many different types of knowledge to make an enterprise work. Therefore we should opt for alliances with professionals like lawyers, engineers, accountants, social scientists etc., who can help us to manage the work successfully.
- The professionals should share our values and cooperativist goals.

We should not isolate ourselves

- We should get involved with other cooperatives and insert our movement into organizations at the national, regional and international level. In this way we can help other cooperativists and ourselves: The battle is global!
- We have to build up other economic groups at the local level and in different sectors.
- We have to discuss leadership and take political action to gain power as a sector of the economy

In Argentina...

- For discussing political actions we founded the IPES (Institute for the Promotion of Solidary Economy)
- For integration of the entire sector we formed the *National Round Table of Solidarity Economy*
- For economic integration we formed corporate councils, cooperative groups and mutuels, SMEs and sectoral networks
- We still have to put in place common platforms on which our enterprises can present themselves.

Building power

- Every enterprise exerts power in and on society. The more connected the enterprises, the more power they yield.
- We should express this power in the political, social, economic and cultural realm.

Learn from the experiences of others

- We look around a lot and learn e.g. from the workers of Mondragón but also from the knowledge accumulated in the network of CICOPA- World. Those are experiences from workers fighting to free themselves from neoliberal capitalism.
- Our enterprises could not move on if they were not integrated into a larger movement in every country, at the regional and global levels.

- We workers are at the heart of the capitalist monster and when we reach the critical mass of enterprises in hands of the people, that is when we change the path of history.
- To get there we do not have to hurry but we should never pause.

Message for the workers of CICOPA North America

λ You are in the centre of the empire, that is why it is of strategic importance that you develop solidarity enterprises here.

λ We, from CICOPA Mercosur, are committed to collaborate with you in this struggle for achieving a greater amount of solidarity on the continent.

λ If we obtain this goal, we will triumph.

- The outlook is wonderful and hope-giving, but the condition is that we work together. The younger generations are replacing the pioneers, taking charge with strength and creativity.
- We, the experienced, accompany them with a slower pace but contributing with our accumulated knowledge

Like this, young and old, women
and men, all together...

We will win the future.